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ABSTRACT

The admission that no one best method exists for educating all children was the beginning of the alternative school movement. Alternative education, in whatever form it assumes, must allow for real parent/student choice through the creation of a number of educational options. These optional public schools take many forms and may be classified according to their modes of instruction, on the basis of instructional emphasis, on resources that cannot be provided in every school, or on better serving the needs of various clientele. School districts vary by size, economic level, and whether they serve a predominantly liberal or conservative constitutency. Despite these differences, school administrators will improve the quality of education, respond to identifiable interest groups, better serve students of varying needs, and reduce racial isolation by organizing a system of options for students and parents. (Author/MLF)

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS: WHO NEEDS THEM?

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Last year a large-city superintendent died. To his surprise, he did not got to heaven. To his even greater surprise, he was in hell for two weeks before he realized he wasn't in his office. Dr. Nolan Estes, General Superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, reported about three years ago that the average tenure of the large-city superintendent was 2.3 years. Some of these outstanding educators who took only a fleeting glimpse at superintending see little hope for our nation's schools and cities. They see everyone fighting and no one discussing education and children. They see pressure groups determining long-term policy, bureaucracies sleeping through rapid changes in school board composition and administrative leadership, and various segments of the education profession taking adversary positions on every insubstantial issue, rather than cooperating to address the substantive issues. W.B. Yeats, in 1919, predicted in his poem, "The Second Coming," the collapse of our "scientific, democratic, fact-accumulative, heterogeneous civilization."

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.

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Yeats goes on in the second verse to predict that "surely some revelation is at hand." Those educators who have given up on urban education do not perceive this imminent revelation. They feel only the disequilibrium. They see the anarchy, the drowning innocence; they see the apathy of the best and the intense hatred of the worst.[1] Are they correct in their assessment? Do their feelings accurately describe urban education--its present and its future? If I subscribed to these doom-laden predictions, my optimistic ancestors would disown me. I was taught to believe--not merely to act as if-- all things turn out ultimately for the best. I, therefore, choose to believe that those who say urban education is doomed have failed to see the new knowledge that comes from conflict, the beauty of change, the hope that springs from new experience.

Why, even today, three years after Dr. Estes' report on the tenure of superintendents, Dr. Paul Salmon, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators, reports that the average time in office for these beleaguered souls is now closer to five years than three. Hope springs eternal!

Why, in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, do I see (if you will pardon the expression) light at the end of the tunnel? All of those citizens who have recently moved from our major cities to the suburbs or who have, within the past few years, sought the haven of private or parochial education for their children do not, I am sure, see any light. They see an endlessly dark tunnel or else one that is hopelessly clogged with teacher strikes, school board politics, angry parents, disruptive students, and bankrupt budgets. I don't. I see those students who were once disruptive, but who are not anymore; I see those teachers who once

posed as adversaries to the system who are now happy and productive; I see those parents who had almost made their disgust with the system a vocation, but who are now the biggest boosters of public education. What caused this turnabout? In a word: alternatives.

Just what is an alternative school? An alternative school is one with which parents, students, and teachers voluntarily become associated. No one need be a part of an alternative school unless he or she wants to. But alternative to what? And the answer has to be an alternative to the school to which a student or teacher is assigned.

School-aged children residing within the district who do not attend a private or parochial school define the enrolled population which the district must serve, and geographic attendance areas have determined who will attend what school. The establishment of a common curriculum has guaranteed equality of educational opportunity within public education. Since parents, once having established a place of residence, have been unable to select thepublic school their children will attend, Boards of Education have attempted to ensure that the quality of education is equal--not necessarily good, but equal--throughout the district. Equality of educational opportunity has, therefore, found expression in common curriculum and instructional methods.[2]

"For years educators have disagreed about the one best method of educating younsters. We have also argued about what should be taught and, in the context of the traditional grade structure, when. In fact, many--including the speaker--have spent a great amount of time attempting to eliminate the traditional grade structure."[3]

Many of you will remember the days when all "progressive" educators were advocating modular scheduling, team teaching, and continuous pro-

gress education or the ungraded school. "Advocates of these methodologies contributed greatly to the re-examination of our conventional lock-step educational system, and they were absolutely right in their conclusions--for a great number of students. Many children do function more productively in more open-ended, flexible settings, but even these environmental paragons did not serve all students well."[4] Some children learn more effectively in a highly structured environment. The admission that no one best method exists for educating all children was the beginning of the alternative school movement. We educators have proclaimed for years that children have different needs, aspirations, and even learning styles, but, until the advent of the alternative school, we had expected all of these differences to be addressed by a single classroom teacher--or at most a "team" of two or three teachers.

Mario Fantini, Dean of the University of Massachusetts, has said it best:

> We say that diversity is a basic belief of our way of life; we say that people are entitled to their points of view whether conservative or liberal; we say that each person is entitled to a choice. Yet, these principles are not applied to the public schools. Instead, we have been looking for the one best way of doing things that will please everyone. Putting all of our eggs in one basket has not been a good practice. Forcing all learners and their families to adjust to a single school model has posed a severe strain on both. The normative school has not prepared for the wide range of human variability that converged on it and increasing numbers of learners could not connect with the scholastic diet being served. The result is growing frustration on both sides. This leads to disconnection, discontent and confrontation.[5]

Fantini goes on to say that too often our schools have just switched "from one orthodoxy to another--often without parent, student or teacher choice."

> At times, tugs-of-war were initiated with groups vying for one form to dominate another. School board members were elected to 'push for' one form of schooling; eg., fundamental, open. Sometimes 'four' to 'three' ~~school~~ school board majorities establish policies that move the schools in one direction or another. Obviously, mandating one pattern on a diverse community is bound to illicit controversy and dissatisfaction.
>
> It is this so-called inflexibility and unresponsiveness to the sentiments of the educational consumers that is behind the alternative school movement on a political level. If one is an educational conservative or liberal, one has the right to a legitimate form of education that is compatible.[6]

The basis of this new relationship is best expressed by two interdependent elements: choice and options. Alternative education, in whatever form it assumes, must allow for real parent/student choice through the creation of a number of educational options; from among these options, parents and students can select.

These optional public schools take many forms and may be classified in many ways. They may be classified according to their modes of instruction, such as free schools, open schools, fundamental schools, continuous progress schools, behavior modification schools, Individually Guided Education (IGE) Schools, and Montessori schools. They may be classified on the basis of instructional emphasis, such as creative and performing arts schools, environmental schools, multicultural schools, bilingual schools, and math-science schools. Or alternative schools may focus on resources, usually resources that cannot be provided in every school. Examples are schools-without-walls (or citywide schools), learning centers, career centers, and educational parks. Finally, alternative schools may better serve the needs of various clientele. Examples of this type alternative are dropout centers, street academies, evening schools, and

pregnancy-maternity centers.[7]

If a student or teacher is assigned to any one of the above, it ceases to be an alternative. Teachers apply to teach in alternative schools, and students voluntarily attend them. One may see by the classifications just enumerated that combinations of these would be feasible in many settings, and many possibilities are not even mentioned.

In Cincinnati, classifications depend on whether the school building is emptied of students to make room for a new student body in a newly created alternative, whether the alternative program occupies only a portion of a school building, or whether a neighborhood school, serving its own students first, is converted into an alternative offering. A neutral-site school in Cincinnati is called an alternative school. This type school is usually content-oriented; that is, this school exists to serve students who want to pursue an unique but broadly defined curriculum. This definition, however, does not always apply. Fundamental schools are located in neutral-site, free-standing structures, but are unique because of structural modifications rather than content emphasis.

A neighborhood school that changes the nature of its program so much that it might be classified as an alternative school, in Cincinnati, is termed a magnet school. Magnet schools attract students from surrounding areas, but most, if not all, of the students from the attendance area served by the school before its conversion get preferential treatment. This differs from alternative schools in that students are accepted into alternative schools on a first-come, first-served basis, so long as entrance requirments (racial, grade level, etc.) are met. The revamped neighborhood school, or magnet, as it is called in Cincinnati, is usually distinguished by its structure rather than its program emphasis.

Although a local PTA or neighborhood council can quite often be convinced that an IGE or nongraded program is superior to their old organizational structure, an entire attendance area will never elect to become a science-math academy, a performing arts school, or a bilingual school. Most of these schools which emphasize a program direction make better alternative schools. They should be one-of-a-kind and be located near the center of a school district or sub-district. IGE schools, nongraded schools, open schools, or fundamental schools, on the other hand, can be duplicated in several sites throughout a school district.

A third classification in Cincinnati is the alternative program. This program serves the entire district or sub-district, but it is located in a building alongside a neighborhood school. The neighborhood school continues to serve the assigned attendance area, while the alternative program is open to a much larger area--usually the entire city. Alternative programs, like magnets, can be duplicated throughout the district even though they are quite often subject centered. Bilingual programs or elementary accelerated programs or high school career programs are examples of alternative programs which can operate very well in the same building with a regular school, but which should remain as independent and separate as possible, so as not to lose their special qualities or identities. Sometimes an alternative program grows so large that it becomes the dominant program in a building; at this point, the decision to dissolve the old attendance areas and to redraw boundary lines has to be made.

The one constant among all alternative schools is the concern for the development of basic skills. Regardless of the nature of the alter-

native, whether it is free, open, nongraded, or fundamental, whether its program emphasis is art, science, or foreign language, it must be concerned with reading, writing, and arithmetic for all children. If it does not pay attention to these necessities, it is a hoax and should be treated as such.

I remember in the mid-sixties when Kettering funds were being used to create twelve unique high schools across the land. This project was a part of what was termed I/D/E/A. Many beautiful innovations occurred in those twelve buildings. Only one that I can recall went off the deep end. Since I was responsible for some of the planning that went into one of those fine schools--the Joel E. Ferris High School in Spokane, Washington--I was privileged to visit almost all the other eleven. One in a midwestern state I will never forget.

This school had what it called socialization class. It was held in the cafetorium. It consisted, among other things, of drinking coke and eating potato chips. I asked to see the student schedule; the principal said there was none. Teachers posted their schedules on their doors, and students attended any class they wanted to. Debris filled every corner of the hall. The noise was deafening. I walked past a boys' rest room to hear loud screaming. I, a visitor, ran in and broke up a fight that looked as if it would have ended in the death of the young boy two others were beating up. I asked when the students took math and English. The principal convinced me that teachers did teach these subjects, but I found that very few students attended the classes. I visited the biology

class to find two girls skinning (literally) a cat. I asked others who had pursued this exercise what they had learned about anatomy, albeit "cat" anatomy. They knew nothing that they could tell me in English about a cat or about any other subject addressed or undressed in biology class. To put it bluntly, nothing was going on in this school that I could see--nothing that would be remotely useful to students that day the next day, or any day in the future. I saw no good models of independent study. I saw no one reading. Who could read? It was too noisy and confusing. In short, this school was a hoax--a cruel trick on the students and their parents. It, I might add, was not an alternative school. Everyone who attended a public school at the high school level in this exclusive lilly-white suburb attended this school. The other I/D/E/A schools were, in fact, tremendous examples of educational innovation; the one just described was a disgrace to the name 'innovation.'

That school did not even consider basic skills development; all alternatives do. Basic skills are a consistent concern of every alternative program. In fact, "alternative schools combine the best of both conservative and liberal philosophies of education. They are conservative in that they conserve the best of traditional education: emphasis on basic skills and academic achievement. They are liberal in their assumption that parents and their children know best what their educational needs and interests are."[3]

Before a school district can formally initiate alternative school programs, it must define for itself its level of commitment to this kind of education and its specific objectives for this new direction. Since

the move to alternative schools requires that the system undertake a fundamentally unique enterprise, it better have a good idea of just what it is seeking to accomplish, and the extent to which it is willing--and able--to support alternative programs. A parent's willingness to enroll his or her children in alternative schools signifies a long-term commitment to this kind of schooling. This is a big decision for a parent, and it must be responsibly reciprocated by the district itself--even though alternative education, like all education today, is susceptible to theoften unpredictable dynamics of the market place and the whims of politicians. A district's commitment to alternative education should develop and sustain new programs in proportion to the willingness of its parent/student constituency to participate. But an educational leader cannot merely create the programs and expect them to succeed. He or she must be a "salesperson." The Board and the Superintendent should decide which goals will be served and then proceed to develop the kind of program marketing and student recruitment system that will ensure success.

The five goals which are most often served by a well-developed system of alternatives are:

1. the improvement of the quality of instruction throughout the school system;
2. a creative response to identifiable interest groups seeking changes within the system that other groups may oppose;
3. better service for students of varying interests, aptitudes, and aspirations;

4. a reduction in racial isolation within the school system by voluntary means;

5. the maintenance of a middle-class constituency in the city.

First, to improve the quality of instruction throughout the school system: I have three children. They live under the same roof, eat the same food, have the same parents; and yet, their educational needs are entirely different. My first child, a daughter, operates best in a flexible arrangement. Rigidity bores her to death; she likes variety and can shift from one setting to another with ease. She would profit from attending a school with many options, with different-sized classes, with time to reflect. An IGE or continuous progress elementary school would have been perfect for her. During her early teens, a modularly scheduled secondary school with an emphasis on the humanities would have suited her perfectly. She is in college now, and rarely during her twelve years of public education did she have the right setting for her education. A few times she did, and, because of her optimistic nature, those are the times she remembers.

My second child, and my first son, is different. His ambition is to be the middle linebacker on the Packers. He is reserved; he needs structure. He cannot function in school without quite a bit of structure. He is an excellent tenth-grade student, studies hard, and is dedicated to being the best at ~~whatever~~ whatever he does. He is theonly person I know who watches television, talks on the phone, reads Latin, and lifts weights--all at the same time. That, my friends, takes organization.

He is lucky. He attends an alternative school--a college preparatory

(highly structured)alternative school. He studies about four hours a night--takes after his mother. (Incidentally, he wants to attend Texas Tech on a football scholarship. I tell you this just in case any of you have any pull with the Tech coaching staff.)

My third child--my second son--is different from the first two. He is so independent I am afraid he will not live to adulthood. He is a seventh grader, has been mugged twice, and still loves all people and animals, and is sure they love him. (And he is usually right.) He is constantly bruised--from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. His legs are blue from trying something new on his bicycle and not quite perfecting it the first twenty tries. Oh, yes. One thing I forgot to tell you; he plays the fiddle.

And he plays the fiddle pretty darn well. When we lived in Dallas, we sent our two sons across town to a school that had some black kids in it. My daughter's school was already integrated, so she went closer to home. We wanted our children to have an integrated education, and so did the parents of thirty-three other children who, with our two, attended the same church. Each morning these thirty-five younsters would meet at the church to board a bus for a forty-five minute trip to a school serving about nine-hundred black children. This school had a program called Suzuki Violin, and my son entered the class as a second-grader.

When we arrived in Cincinnati, he wanted to continue playing the violin. We found him a private teacher, and he progressed nicely. Strangely, though, he hated music at school. He made all "o's" (outstanding achievment) in everything but music. In that subject, he consistently received "n's" which stand for "needs improvement." He refused to sing in class, and when his mother and I conferred with him about

this, he said, " I won't sing them. I can't stand those dumb songs."

One day, the teachers all over the city went on strike. Tim's neighborhood school was practically inoperative. I decided to take him to visit a few of the schools which were still in operation, namely, the alternative schools. He began the visitation at the School for Creative and Performing Arts. He hasn't left yet. That summer, he took his one quarter-sized violin, and went to audition for the school. He was accepted not only in violin, but also in drama and vocal music. VOCAL MUSIC? We were stunned. The kid hated to sing--he told us so himself. His first year there, he was selected for All-City Boychoir. The following year, he sang the soprano solo in Vivaldi's "Gloria." Then he sang the lead in a Benjamin Britten opera with the Cincinnati Symphony. The next thing I knew, a man from New York had heard him sing, and Tim was being called to New York to audition for this and that. This year he sang several professional roles, among them that of "Oliver" in the musical by the same name that ran for five weeks in Cincinnati's professional theater, Playhouse in the Park. Next month he opens at the Uris Theater on Broadway in New York, singing the role of a young prince and acting as understudy for Louis in "The King and I" with Yul Brynner and Constance Towers. Brynner and Richard Rodgers selected him themselves. This kid is twelve years old. Perhaps twenty other children in his school could tell similar stories. One child sang at Carnegie Hall. Another toured with the Metropolitan Opera Company. Another performed with a Walt Disney Production of "Peter Pan." Five or six have been on MGM Children's Specials, broadcast on NBC-TV. Three others have been on Broadway during the past two years. Producers looking

for young talent now come to Cincinnati's School for Creative and Performing Arts first. None of these children--including my own-- would have been able to develop their obvious talents in their neighborhood schools. The alternative school has already given them great experience and developed talents that may someday give them a big jump ahead in careers. But the school is not a "Shirley Temple factory." The child lead in Richard Rodger's "Rex" returned to the school in Cincinnati after having performed on Broadway, only to sing in the Chorus in the schools production of "Carnival." He did not have the leading part. In that school, the leads are passed around, so everyone gets to be a "star" if only for a night. And so, my son, who was making "n's", and who ~~received~~ refused to sing "those dumb songs" in his neighborhood school, will, after three years in an alternative school, make his debut on Broadway. This has to be some kind of success story, and all because the right alternative school was available at the right time for a kid whose particular needs were not being met by his neighborhood school. And oh, by the way, the kid can read, write and compute, too. The school places great emphasis on these basics--so much so that the staff will not allow a child to perform onstage or to show art work in an exhibit if his or her academic work is not kept up to standards.

Why do I go into all this? Because if my three children are so different, just think how different the children of a total school district are--or even the children of a single school. To improve the quality of instruction in any system, large or small, one must match the learning styles of the children to appropriate learning environments.

All districts should have alternatives; no school or school district is too large or too small. New York and Los Angelos have alternatives, but so does Quincy, Illinois; North East San Antonio; Pasadena, California; and Richardson, Texas.

Second, to respond creatively to identifiable interest groups seeking changes within the system that other groups may oppose. School Board members and Superintendents must remember that the groups that demand fundamental education or back-to-basics and the groups that demand that we "deschool" society are not necessarily wrong. In fact, for some students, they are quite right. Why have some students left public education for private schools? Why have some creative teachers left the public classroom to form their own schools? Is it because these schools are better? Yes and no. Better for some, but not for all.

My position is that no reason should exist for a child's attending private schools. Reasons do exist in some settings, but they should not. (Attending parochial schools for religious reasons is another matter.) If the public schools are offering adequate alternatives, if they are meeting the needs of all identifiable interest groups, the public system should be sufficient to meet all educational needs except religious ones.

When I arrived in Cincinnati, I found that several teachers had resigned to form their own secondary school, something called the "New Morning School." This school treated the entire city as a classroom. Much like the Parkway Program in Philadelphia, the New Morning School had students working on farms, in hospitals, at the universities, in banks, and at any number of other places. The students still studied English, history, science and math, but their elective credits were

earned outside the classroom. I found some of these students really knew what was happening at City Hall, others actually knew what occurred behind stage at the theater, and still others knew more about banking than the superintendent of schools did.

The alternative program entitled "Citywide Learning Community" was the easiest one I ever organized. I merely hired the entire New Morning staff, and they brought their students with them. That school was meeting ~~the~~ a need that should have been met in the public sector. Today it is. It does not meet the needs of all high school students--only about 200 of them. And many of its present students could not have afforded the private school. This school, therefore, is serving to attract private school students to the system, while better serving certain other students who are "stuck" with the public school system.

Third, to better serve students of varying interests, aptitudes, and aspirations. This goal overlaps with the first two. How can one improve the quality of instruction and respond creatively to identifiable interest groups without better serving students of varying interests, aptitudes, and aspirations? The only difference in this goal is in its motivational dimension. This goal is served by focusing on the needs of students that are apart from the need to read, write, and compute. Skyline Career Development Center in Dallas responds to this need. It was not formed in response to the expressed wishes of an interest group. Originally, it served to improve the status of "vocational education." It offered, and still does, what one educator in Dallas termed a whole pharmacy of educational prescriptions. It was designed to serve the

~~the~~ student who wanted to go right to work upon graduation, and the one who wanted to go directly to Harvard or Yale. In fact, it is not necessary for a student to decide which way he wants to go until very late in the educational process. The doors are never closed to a change of direction or an expanded interest.

Many examples of alternatives organized to meet the needs of a specific set of students may be pointed to. If they are organized with this in mind, they will have a difficult time failing. The community of interest formed when teachers, parents, and students voluntarily work together in a special school almost always results in more satisfied teachers, more supportive parents, and more happy and productive children.

One story brings this point home. Cincinnati is a monolingual city. Everyone speaks English, and with few exceptions, only English. But Cincinnati has perhaps the most rapidly growing bilingual alternative programs in the entire nation. Why? Cincinnati's programs begin in grade one. Men who served in France or Germany during their soldiering days want their children to learn the language of that nation. Other parents are embarrassed by the linguichauvinism of Americans--the ones who expect everyone else to speak English, regardless of the global location. Whatever the motivation, the community of interest in apparent and active.

Cincinnati does have a German heritage, although the German language was outlawed at school by school board policy during the forties. Many of the citizens of Cincinnati, though, would like to recapture some of the lost heritage. The German-English Bilingual Program, therefore, is one of the most popular. It now extends to grade four, with a grade being added each year as new first graders enter the program. It will, ultimately, go all the way through grade twelve. The German teachers were recruited from Germany.

Last year, when the program extended only to grade three, parent night was held in one of the school auditoriums to enable parents to see the students perform. At that time, 300 children were enrolled in the program. More than 900 parents came to the event. If only the parents had come, there would of course have been a maximum of 600. The ringers were grandparents, uncles, aunts, neighbors, brothers and sisters and so forth. We had never witnessed such a community of interest. Anyone trying to dissolve that program would have a riot on his hands.

Fourth, to reduce racial isolation within the school system by voluntary means. Judge George Edwards of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals said recently, "No court. . . to my knowledge has rejected alternative schools designed to fit particular needs of particular students without regard to race."[9] Alternative schools alone may not be sufficient to desegregate a large urban school system, but they can accomplish so much that any mandatory plan handed down is much easier to implement in a city that already has alternatives. In city after city, alternative schools are being used to reduce racial isolation. Minneapolis and St. Paul started early and have made great progress. Cincinnati's alternatives are fifty-fifty black/white, as are those in St. Louis.

Mandatory desegregation plans in small cities have quite often worked well; in larger cities, they have tended to accelerate the rush to the suburbs and to private and parochial schools. White flight has been occurring anyway; but mandatory desegregation plans have made what might have happened in ten years occur in three or four. My ad-

vice is: do not think you will be allowed to remain segregated when all around you are being forced to meet constitutional requirements. Act now. Begin your alternative system now. Give your parents and students a choice. Control the racial mix at the receiving school, but allow anyone in the district to make application to attend. If you run out of spots, start another alternative school.

Judge Edwards said something else recently that I think you should hear:

> How could we, if we wanted to, create a more dangerous condition than this--the downtown district owned by whites and occupied by them by the thousands upon thousands in daytime hours--all the rest of the central city occupied by black residents--the central city surrounded by a white suburban ring in a state dominated by whites. If you add a large white majority of policemen, firemen, and school teachers dealing with crime and fires and children in black neighborhoods, while black youth in the central city has the highest percentage of unemployment in America, such a picture presents a certainty of race conflict. Indeed, it may come to threaten domestic conflict comparable to a second Civil War.[10]

Admittedly the schools cannot solve all the problems of racial conflict, but they can do more than they now do in most cities. Children are in school six hours a day, five days a week. If these children are attending schools they want to attend in an integrated setting, the possibilities of racial conflict are reduced considerably. In Cincinnati, no racial conflict occurs in the alternative schools; in fact, virtually no discipline problems occur. The schools, for the most part, are more than desegregated; they are integrated. Students, black and white, are a part of that community of interest; they are too busy working together on tasks that interest them to have time for conflict. If you doubt me, go visit them. Do not announce your visit. Just pop in, the way parents, administrators, and others have

now been doing for four years.

You see, I believe in integration, real integration, and I want to minimize resegregation. Alternative schools are the best way to do this. If you start in the elementary grades and allow the programs to grow one grade at a time, you will find that almost all children remain. Why would they leave? The program is better for them, and it is integrated. Cincinnati started with three programs. They now number twenty-one and are found in more than forty locations. St. Louis started with nine, Minneapolis with four, and, hear this, Seattle with thirty-one planned for next September. Many of the thirty-one, though, are duplicates at different grade levels. Seattle has done some excellent planning, and I expect to see most of them operational the first day of school.

Cincinnati anticipates that by 1980 forty percent of its students will be in alternative schools. Add to this the voluntary majority-to-minority transfers and the integrated neighborhoods, and the possibility that most of the city's schools can be voluntarily integrated becomes readily believable.

Fifth, to maintain a middle-class constituency in the city. This goal applies, for the most part, only to cities, while all the previous goals apply almost equally to urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Cities, though, are becoming increasingly black and poor. Middle-class and high-income citizens, both minority and majority, are leaving the middle city and moving into the affluent areas which ring virtually all major urban areas. Why do most of them leave? Because of the public

school system. They see the city schools as unsafe; they think the suburban systems are more responsive to the needs of their children. They point to higher achievement test scores among the affluent. So what else is new?

City schools have advantages which can never be duplicated in smaller districts; the converse is true also. Smaller districts allow one child to do everything; he or she can play in the band, participate in athletics, and enter the interscholastic typing contest. City districts, on the other hand, can specialize to a degree not possible in the one, two, or eight building district. No small district could afford a Skyline Career Development Center. No small district could possibly develop a school comparable to the Creative and Performing Arts School in Cincinnati, nor can the smaller district offer Russian, Swahili, or Chinese. Small districts can offer alternatives, but not in the number and variety of the large district.

What I am saying is that city systems should take advantage of their largeness; they should provide the diverse offerings that will attract middle-income citizens--black, white and brown--into the system. The outmigration must be reversed, and new citizens to an area must <u>choose</u> to live in the city because of the public school system. In Cincinnati, approximately 2500 students during the past two years have returned to the public schools from private and parochial schools. More than one hundred are paying $350 tuition to send their children from suburban districts to one of the city alternative schools. Many

families have moved back into the city in order for their children to attend the Montessori alternative, the Math-Science Academy, the Fundamental School, or the Creative and Performing Arts School. Until recently Montessori education was restricted to the private sector. Two years ago, the first public Montessori school in the nation opened in Cincinnati. This year, one opened in Dallas. Cities now all over the nation are planning for the initiation of Montessori Schools in their districts.

Fantini has put it succinctly: "Rather than looking at the negative side of urban schools, why not emphasize the positive aspects of city life? This is a process which is deceptively simple and which will require considerable planning."[11] The rich resources of the city make almost any type school a possibility. Our task is to use these resources and to begin now to create adequate options to meet the needs of a diverse population. You may need to call in consultants to help you get started, but above all, get started now.

Whether you find youself in a large, medium-sized, or small district, whether your district is wealthy or poor, whether you serve a predominantly liberal or conservative consituency, you will improve the quality of education, respond to identifiable interest groups, better serve students of varying needs, and reduce racial isolation by organizing a system of options for students and parents.

Who needs alternative schools? You do; I do; our country does. The decision to become a part of this rapidly growing development just might be the most important decision facing public schools today.

Footnotes

1. Donald R. Waldrip, "Urban Education: The Spring of Hope," Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce Publication, September, 1972.

2. Donald R. Waldrip, "Alternative Schools: Program Marketing and Student Recruitment. Unpublished paper presented to the First Annual International Conference on Magnet Schools, Dallas, Texas, 1977.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Mario D. Fantini, "History and Philosophy of Alternative Schools," unpublished paper presented to the First Annual International Conference on Magnet Schools, Dallas, Texas, 1977.

6. Ibid.

7. Vernon H. Smith, "Educational Options: What's Happening Today," unpublished paper presented to the First Annaul Internation Conference on Magnet Schools, Dallas, Texas, 1977.

8. Donald R. Waldrip, "Schools That May Rescue Cities--As Well As Kids," Cincinnati Magazine, Spring, 1976.

9. George Edwards, "Legal Implications of Magnet Schools," unpublished paper presented to the First Annaul International Conference on Magnet Schools, Dallas, Texas, 1977.

10. Ibid.

11. Fantini, loc. cit.